

...that [USCIRF's 2013 Annual Report](#) recommends that 15 countries be designated as the worst violators of religious freedom?

USCIRF issued its 2013 Annual Report on April 30. The report highlights the state of religious freedom abroad during 2012 and identifies governments that are the most egregious violators of this fundamental freedom. USCIRF's 2013 Annual Report includes more countries than ever before -- 29 specifically are addressed and at least 22 additional countries are discussed in thematic sections.

The International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) mandates that USCIRF issue the Annual Report to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress by May 1 of each year. In the report, which also is issued publicly, USCIRF recommends that the Secretary of State re-designate the following eight nations as "countries of particular concern," or CPCs, for their governments' perpetration or toleration of systematic, ongoing, egregious religious freedom violations: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan. USCIRF also finds that seven other countries meet the CPC threshold and should be so designated: Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam.

The 2013 Annual Report includes chapters on eight countries that are on USCIRF's Tier 2, which replaces the previously-used "Watch List" designation. These nations are: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Cuba, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, and Russia. USCIRF found the violations these governments engage in or tolerate are particularly severe and meet at least one

criterion, but not all, of IRFA's three-fold "systematic, ongoing, egregious" CPC standard.

The Annual Report also discusses religious freedom concerns in other countries USCIRF monitored during the year, including Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Ethiopia, Turkey, Venezuela, and various Western European nations. In addition, the report includes in-depth analysis of U.S. international religious freedom policy, along with the following thematic issues: Constitutional Changes; Severe Religious Freedom Violations by Non-State Actors; Increasing Adoption and Enforcement of Laws against Blasphemy and Defamation of Religions; Imprisonment of Conscientious Objectors; Legal Retreat from Religious Freedom in Post-Communist Countries; Kidnapping and Forced Religious De-Conversion in Japan; and Religious Freedom Issues in International Organizations.